

ALASKA COUNCIL ON EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
MINUTES - Thursday, October 6, 2011

Call to Order:

Dave Hull, Chair, called the meeting to order at **8:35** a.m.

Welcome and Introductions:

ACEMS Members in Attendance:

Danita Koehler, MD
Dave Hull
Don Hudson, DO
John Dickens

Karen O'Neill, MD
Ron Bowers
Soren Threadgill

State Staff in Attendance:

Kerre Fisher, Dep. Director DPH
Miriam Lemke, Administrative Assistant
Quinn Sharkey, EMS Data Program Manager
Shelley K. Owens, EMS Unit Manager

Ward Hurlburt, MD, Chief Medical Officer/DPH
Director
Chris Laborde, Preparedness Unit Manager

EMS Regional Staff in Attendance:

Sue Hecks, Executive Director, Southern Region EMS Council
Aggie Jack, EMS Director, Maniilaq EMS
Dan Johnson, Director, Interior Region EMS Council
Bobbi Leichty, Director, Southeast Region EMS Council
Dave Potashnick, EMS Regional Director, North Slope Borough Fire Department
Louis Murphy, EMS Director, Norton Sound Health Corporation
Brian Lefferts, EMS Director, Yukon-Kuskokwim Region
Skip Richards, Chugachmiut Corporation
Dave Rockney, IREMSC
Thomas Meyer, SREMSC
Dave Abbott, Subarea Coordinator, Copper River EMS
Jane Schultz, Subarea Coordinator, Kenai Peninsula
Jud Brenteson, Subarea Coordinator, Kodiak Island

Liaison Representative Members in Attendance:

Cindy Cashen, Director, Alaska Highway Safety Office
Frank Sacco, MD, Alaska Native Medical Center and American College of Surgeons
Ken Zafren, MD, EMS Medical Director
Andy Jones, DMVA
Mike Motti, SEARHC
Erich Scheunemann, AK Fire Chiefs Assn.

Others:

Mark Johnson, EMS-C Committee Chair
Leon Morgan, DMVA
Brian Fisher, DMVA
Linda Peters, ProComm Alaska

Bruce Richter, USDHS
Del Smith, ALMR Operations Manager
Jeff Tucker, Fire Chief

The agenda for October 6-7, 2011 was approved. The meeting minutes from February 2-3, 2011 were not available.

Executive Committee Report (Dave Hull)

A letter of support for the grant application for the Alaska Violence and Injury Prevention Program was submitted in February and a memorandum was sent to Governor Parnell requesting support for the EMS office. Dave appreciates the hard work of the State office, and thanks especially Shelley and Quinn. He thanks everyone for the condolence card they sent him during the last meeting.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS AND STAFF

ACEMS Liaison Member Reports

Andy Jones, DMVA

Andy reported on operations during the Crooked Creek incident. On the planning side, they are focusing on planning for catastrophic events which is the Governor is interested in. Questions were asked about communications, narrow banding compliance, and oxygen transport. Andy has contacts with the FAA and offered to help Dr. Hudson with the issue.

Frank Sacco, MD, Chair, Trauma System Review Committee

Dr. Sacco reported that they have been making progress getting facilities to meet standards. Another accomplishment is that the Trauma Care Fund was established in 2010 and 17 facilities have asked for applications and consultations. Seward and Dillingham will be reviewed for Level 4 this year. The goal is to regionalize care. Frank states that the rural trauma course is very popular: the demand exceeds the resources. A trauma system plan is being developed. The Trauma System Review Committee will meet in November and discuss Level 5 criteria and issues. The priority for future years is to continue education. There are no plans to fund Level 5 centers. They need support for refunding the Trauma Care Fund.

Cindy Cashen, Director, Alaska Highway Safety Office

Their goal is to reduce the number of traffic fatalities and major injuries by half by 2030. In order to reach that goal, they administer single project grants. She points out that you can apply online. The Strategic Safety Plan has been approved. Cindy presented a grant chart showing that 0.54% of all monies go to EMS, whereas impaired driving projects receive 59.22%). Dr. Koehler thanked Cindy for her work.

Erich Scheunemann, Alaska Fire Chiefs' Association

The Alaska Fire Chiefs' Association has formed an EMS Subcommittee. The Chair is Chief Rich Etheridge. They are working on a mission statement as well as on a 5 year strategic plan.

Mike Motti, SEARHC

The regional native corporations had a difficult year because of budget cuts. Aggie talked about staff reductions and closure of the day care center. Sue said that the subareas have had major cutbacks in staffing and no money for travel. There was a discussion about ETTs: 14 is the minimum age for becoming an ETT. SEARHC currently emphasizes injury prevention and health promotion.

State EMS Medical Director's Report (Ken Zafren, MD)

Dr. Zafren wants to expand the EMS data system so that all Alaska EMS data can be collected in the AURORA system. The EMS-C grant requires a minimum of 6 hours of pediatric CME per cycle for recertification of EMTs. He has been working on the revision to the Cold Injury Guidelines. Many of the current medical directors would welcome a specific training for EMS Medical Directors. A trauma system for all Alaskans needs to be established since the Alaska Native Medical Center is currently the only Level II Trauma Center in Alaska. They will continue to use expanded scope as a tool to help local medical directors provide the best evidence-based medicine. With regard to the influenza season, they will continue to authorize EMT-IIs and EMT-IIIs to administer influenza vaccine.

EMS for Children Committee Report (Mark Johnson)

Mark reports that Raj Maskay conducted the Alaska EMSC survey 2010 whose purpose was to understand the status of the pediatric medical direction and equipment of the EMS agencies. It was distributed to 81 EMS agencies of which 73 responded. Mark also reports that he did site visits and met with hospital staff in Fairbanks. Dr. Koehler stresses the importance of having equal quality emergency care for children. Mark points out that four 200,000 grants will be offered and that they will focus on states with a high native population.

EMS Certification Report; EMS Training Report (Quinn Sharkey)

Approximately 2,400 certifications have been received and processed. There are currently about 4,600 EMTs certified in the State of Alaska, half of which are EMT-Is. There are approximately 400 licensed paramedics in Alaska and 270 medical directors. The future goal is to maintain the momentum to go to an electronic certification system. A proposal to develop an online application system has been submitted to the Division and the Department of H&SS. Quinn thanked everyone for their encouragement and John Dickens thanked Quinn for his work.

EMS Training Committee Report (David Rockney)

The Training Committee met in September. They would like to see more progress on the regulations revision. The State office website should be updated. The Department of Public Safety should have a seat on the committee. David asks ACEMS to take action on this. He reports that they discussed and updated CME guidelines and that Southern Region produced a document showing the differences in certification levels of all the states and US territories.

AK Interoperable Communications Committee Report (John Dickens)

John represents ACEMS at AKICC. They meet quarterly. He discussed the FCC narrow banding compliance issue: all public safety and business industrial land mobile radio systems must migrate to 12.5 kHz efficiency technology by January 1, 2013. He stresses that there is a lack of funding. 911 access is not available everywhere in Alaska. This needs to be improved. Regarding ALMR, he stated that it is intended as a statewide system but has not been fully implemented. Each licensee is responsible for reprogramming its radios to comply with the narrowband mandate; however, if agencies share each other's frequencies for mutual aid response, it is critical that they execute the transition simultaneously to ensure there is no interruption in communication. The US. Army informed the state that it will cease funding a portion of the ALMR infrastructure and ALMR radios are costly. Ongoing interoperability problems occur in some areas when multiple agencies respond to an incident. Funding for equipment in order to meet the FCC narrowband mandate is needed.

EMS Communication Panel: ALMR update and Narrowband Compliance

Dave Abbott, Copper River EMS, presented a case scenario illustrating communication difficulties during a bear mauling incident. Multiple medevac agencies were contacted. For 30 hours they were

trying to figure out what was going on due to bad communication and inadequate information. John Lynn: there are no radio communications on the Denali Highway; ALMR does not cover this area.

Introduction of the Panel:

- John Lynn, State Div. of Enterprise Technology Services, helped build the ALMR system (participating by phone)
- Linda Peters, ProComm, supports majority of local dispatch centers with service, maintainance. Customers have asked them to help with narrowband compliance issue.
- Brian Fisher (Division of Homeland Security, Chief of Operations)- his agency has provided the majority of grand funding to the first respond agencies.
- Jeff Tucker, Fire Chief, serves on Alaska Interoperability Communications Committee
- Leon Morgan, Emergency Management Specialist III, runs statewide Interoperability Training
- Del Smith, ALMR Operations Manager
- Bruce Richter, Office of Emergency Communications, Department of Homeland Security
- Kerre Fisher, Deputy Director, Division of Public Health, provides grants and support for 7 EMS Regions

ALMR Update (Del Smith)

The U.S Army purchased radio equipment at 41 State of Alaska sites. They have continued to pay for maintenance up until recently. They notified the State one-and-a-half years ago that they want to divest the equipment at the 41 sites. If the State does not want them, they will be removed. The U.S. Army will pay for repairs for 13 sites until Dec. 31, 2011. On July 1, the other 28 sites will be divested by the U.S. Army. If the State accepts those sites, funding decisions have to be made. There are 82 sites and no more will be developed. The cost for maintenance depends on the level of service.

Narrowband Compliance

Sue: the Regional Directors have been asked to put together communications inventory for the state in order to determine the scope of need for narrow banding compliance; however, putting together this data is complicated. Brian: nobody will be able to develop an inventory of radios: it's not possible. The priority was always to financially support the unserved areas of the State. They gave out lots of grants and they bought radios. They will continue to do that. The Dept. developed a communications assessment and his committee funded a quarter million dollars for it. He wants to know what happened to it.

Leon: he needs to know what technologies are available in the different regions? How can they be tied together? How can we train the people in those areas? He is the contact person to help.

Jeff: what agencies need help with narrow banding? If you have a license with the FCC, you have been notified about narrow banding. The question is: Who has not been helped? There needs to be community planning meetings: the AFCA can coordinate the community planning. Sue: the EMS Regions don't know which communities have narrowband and who they should call to find out. Leon should be contacted regarding these questions.

Linda: many people do not have a license for their fixed equipment and they cannot just put the equipment on the license. The problem is that many are not compliant with the license requirements.

John: their goal is to have a standardized plan: 4 repeater frequencies and one simplex frequency which works for EMS anywhere in Alaska.

Bobbi Leichthy: what happened to the quarter million dollar study? John does not know. Sue: the survey was sent out but they did not get the full return. They developed a database but it is just a snapshot in time. Leon: he is the contact person if people need help.

Jeff: regarding ALMR, each region has representative. Shelley has a guide to Narrow banding (distributed at meeting).

Dave Hull: can marine radios can be used land to land and land to sea? Linda: you cannot use marine radios legally. They are for marine use only.

Jeff : there is a statewide group working on the 911 issue and that a 911 Coordinator will be hired soon.

Discussion about who is in charge. Somebody needs to make sure responders can communicate.

Communications failure is a public health issue. Brian: contact Leon: he can tell you what has been done in the communities.

Linda offers to host a series of teleconferences to determine if agencies are licensed.

Dave thanked the panel.

Adjourned: **4:15 pm**

ALASKA COUNCIL ON EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES
MINUTES - Friday, October 7, 2011

Call to Order: Dave Hull called the meeting to order at 8:40 am

The panel discussion yesterday went well. Now we have resources and a phone number of who to call. John: will provide updates in the future.

Section of Emergency Programs Update (Kerre Fisher, DPH)

Kerre welcomed the fact that ACEMS is working on the communication issue. She stresses that the panel addresses the problems they are aware of. The gap occurs when people from smaller villages are not aware that they can get help. She mentions that 2 candidates for the position as the Emergency Programs Section Chief will be interviewed the following week and that this person will sit on the Interoperability Committee. That person will make sure the Region's needs are met. Kerre adds that she would like to be part of the 911 committee. The Section Chief will also bridge the gaps between the Section's programs: EMS, Preparedness and Trauma. Regarding the budget, many grants are being eliminated. The Governor clearly stated that he will not backfill these grants. She advises talk to your legislators. Dr. Koehler: EMS is a young profession and is part of DOT, DHSS and the Department of Homeland Security. People think of fire and police when they hear Public Safety but not EMS, but EMS is part of Public Safety. Discussion of the value of the volunteer and expense of training. Kerre: volunteers provide an essential state service. People will die without them: they provide a safety net. Need to get word to the federal and state governments the volunteers provide an essential service that can't be done by the state. Kerre welcomes phone calls. Let her know of concerns about the EMS office and admiration for the staff's work under pressure. Shelley has done an amazing job.

REGIONAL EMS REPORTS

Interior Region (Dan Johnson)

Dan reports that they had their annual meeting. They are in the middle of a Strategic Planning process. They shape their 5 goal areas to the funding goals. They have adopted a meeting schedule on their board and they focus on planning and evaluating. Code Blue is still successful but federal funding may be decreasing. They just start on Phase 11. Training continues to be the core of their activities. They trained over 700 people. Their Symposium is scheduled for March 21-24, 2012.

Southern Region (Sue Hecks)

Thomas Meyer has joined the team. He worked as a paramedic for 10 years. Karen Peterson has been with them for 26 years. They have a new website and have worked hard on their infrastructure in their classroom. They are in the process of launching a new accounting system. The training department is very busy. SREMSC offers a \$500.00 scholarship program. The U.S Army contacted their training department; they want to train their combat lifesavers and foot soldiers. Regarding Code Blue they have the Phase 12 applications ready to go out.

North Slope Borough EMS (Dave Potashnick)

They sent out a survey and 60% of the participants felt they had increased abilities but felt they didn't get enough training. They sent staff out to national conferences and continue to do weekly training. They also did a cold water rescue course. Regarding communications, they had to replace the communication system because it was 20 years old. Regarding Code Blue, Phases 7 and 9 are completed but they are still waiting for an ambulance to be delivered.

Southeast Region (Bobbi Leichthy)

Southeast successfully conducted a disaster drill on Prince of Wales Island. The ETT online model is complete. She hopes that the ETT Instructor course will be online (20-30 hours). The online class is more detailed than what is taught in the field. They are revising the ETT book with Emergency Medical Responder and Alaska specific information. Symposium is coming up April 27-28 with Presymposium on April 24-26. They see an increase in clinical track. They are applying for a planning grant to draw certified and uncertified services into one service with satellite stations. Danita would like to write a letter of support for this grant.

Maniilaq Association (Aggie Jack)

Selawik has a new clinic. They've purchased an oxygen-generating system. They are down to 2 EMS staff, but still teach. They are excited about the ETT online course. They had a successful disaster drill in the ocean with 20 "victims". They are using telemedicine and continue to teach first aid. Code Blue: most of the purchases have been made for Phase 10.

Norton Sound EMS Report (Louis Murphy)

They continue to expand patient care, teach 60-70 classes a year and have a total of 350 flights a year. Half of flights bring the patients to Nome, half go to Anchorage. Code Blue is almost complete, they purchased 5 more vehicles. They applied for a hospital preparedness grant. They have a new education program: Introduction to Healthcare. Louis described a bear mauling incident.

Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation EMS (Brian Lefferts)

Staffing has changed: they now have 2 new employees (new EMS Coordinator, paramedic). Most training is done through their office. They are selling Aniak Dragonslayer hats as a fundraiser for \$25. Regarding Code Blue, they have completed Phase 9. Gun Safe Project: they don't have a list of homeowners and cannot do an evaluation. Danita would like to help with a letter of support. Brian also reports that they sent out irons to villages/schools so reflectors can be attached to children's clothes, and they follow up with phone calls.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES, TASK FORCES, WORKING GROUPS, AND STAFF

Symposium Planning Update (Thomas Meyer)

Thomas introduced himself as the Regional Training Coordinator. This year they included a map, session numbers and information about certification in the Response Newsletter. There will be 4 out of State speakers at Symposium. He is currently works on CME letters, and reported that Southern Region has applied to be a continuing education provider for the California Board of Nursing. He described the process. October 17th is deadline for online registration.

Regional Directors & Coordinators Report (Sue Hecks)

Sue introduced Jane Schulz as the Vice-Chair. Chris Laborde gave a presentation on public health preparedness. They discussed oxygen transport and that there are 20 days of medical supplies available in Alaska in case of an emergency. AURORA data project: they developed new paper run sheets to be in line with AURORA. They also talked about the regulations update project, EMS communications (identifying issues), and Code Blue. She asked ACEMS to write a letter of support for Code Blue. They talked about the ETT online project and legislation, and updated their top ten priority list. This has been originally used as a tool to train new Section Chiefs and they presented it to Commissioner Streur. Sue thanked Quinn Sharkey for his work.

PIE Committee Report (Skip Richards)

Skip would like someone to take over his position as a chair. A new EMS System in Crisis document is needed. They encourage small EMS and fire services to cross-train (integrated service: Fire, Rescue and EMS). The EMS Poster needs to be updated and will now be put into an electronic format. Support EMS training in the schools. Skip certifies the teachers in his region as CPR instructors and provides materials. Local people need to be more involved in EMS and need to be educated further. An ongoing problem is recruitment.

EMS Program Report (Shelley Owens)

She acknowledged the first anniversary of the death of Steve O'Connor. It was a difficult year but she appreciates the encouragement of ACEMS. The Section will have a new Chief soon. Lee Parham left and they are currently recruiting for the position as EMS Training Coordinator and EMS Data Manager. Shelley thanked the Regions for their work and compliments Southern Region for preparing the Symposium, especially Thomas. The office submitted a budget proposal to create an online certification database. Purchase of the Fire (Rescue) Bridge is in the works, and the regulations revision project will be on track when new staff are hired. Shelley gave a presentation to the Legislative Health Caucus on modes of EMS transportation in the State. Thanks to all who provided slides, especially Dr. Hudson.

Preparedness Program Report (Chris LaBorde)

Chris introduced herself as the Preparedness Manager of the Section of Emergency Programs. There are 5 people in the Unit plus a CDC representative. She explains State Preparedness: Federal grants were given to open up a Preparedness office. They are 100% federally funded. She described the state response plan: local communities have an EOC (Emergency Operations Center). If not, you go directly to the State Emergency Communications Center (SECC). DHSS's EOC is located in Anchorage at the State Public Laboratory facility. CDC and the Lower 48 need to be educated about the AK road system regarding delivering medications in an emergency and that we have to use airplanes. Preparedness goes beyond the normal level of day to day operation (pandemics, mass casualties). They give money to Public Health Nursing, Epidemiology, EMS, Trauma, ANTHC, Public Education, State Laboratory, and hospitals. She described Alaska Respond which is a coalition of licensed volunteers in case of a disaster. What do they need to know from EMS or from the Regions in case of an emergency? Is medical and health infrastructure damaged? How many casualties? Are water, oxygen, blood or medical supplies needed? Patient tracking needs to be improved. They participate in the Alaska Shield Exercise which occurs every 2 years: the 2012 Cold Weather Exercise will be in Fairbanks and a Mass Earthquake exercise will be held in 2014 in order to find out what they have or will need to improve. The Federal Medical Station will be called the State of Alaska Medical Station once it is given to the State by CDC.

Trauma Program Report (Julie Rabeau – by telephone)

A trauma system is an organized multidisciplinary response to managing treatment of severely injured people and it spans the full spectrum of prevention and emergency care to recovery and rehabilitation. Alaska has the second highest trauma mortality rate in the nation. The only Level II Trauma Center in the state is the Alaska Native Medical Center. The following hospitals were redesignated as a Level IV Trauma Center: Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional, Norton Sound Regional, Sitka Community and Mt. Edgecumbe. The following training was offered in 2011: Advanced Trauma Life Support, Rural Trauma Team Development, Disaster Management and Emergency Preparedness. The Trauma Unit will teach PHTLS in fiscal year 12. Pending projects include a simulation lab for pre-hospital and hospital staff in mass triage and trauma training, a combat causality course for pre-hospital and hospital providers for mass causality and trauma training, an Advance Trauma Operative management

course and a Real time hospital/pre-hospital computer-aided dispatch status and tracking software system.

Division of Public Health Report (Dr. Ward Hurlburt, MD)

Dr. Hurlburt described how EMS fits into the Department of HSS: he welcomes that EMS and Preparedness work together. The Governor's priority is the economy and on Dec 15 we will know the Governor's budget. Dr. Hurlburt talked with Commissioner Streur about Code Blue. He discussed the deadline regarding narrow banding. There is a lack of clarity about who is the lead on this issue. He discussed the issue of finding a legislator and a bill to attach the ILCOR amendment to. He thanks Quinn Sharkey for his good work and progress and Shelley for her hard work.

Persons to be Heard

Ron Bowers thanks SREMSC and Shelley Owens for the snacks.

Membership Status & Committees

- The positions will expire for: Ron Bowers, John Dickens and Dave Hull. Please send Shelley copies of your letters requesting reappointment.
- Dr. Danita Koehler and Roy Sursa will join the Bylaws Committee

Select dates for next meeting & Adjournment

- Next ACEMS meeting: February 2-3, 2012.

Review of Action Items

1. **Motion:** [Ron Bowers/Soren Threadgill] To write a letter to requesting the Dept. of Public Safety provide a representative to the Training Committee.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
2. **Motion:** [Soren Threadgill/John Dickens] To write letter from ACEMS to congratulate the EMS Award winners.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
3. **Motion:** [Dave Hull/John Dickens] To write a letter of support to continue funding Code Blue.
Action: Motion passed unanimously
4. **Motion:** [Danita Koehler/Ron Bowers] To write a letter of support to fund a Trauma "pool of money". (2.5 Mill) (Will send Dr. Frank Sacco a draft letter)
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
5. **Motion:** [Dave Hull/?] To support the SEREMS Region grant application.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
6. **Motion:** [Dave Hull/Danita Koehler] To write a letter of support for Code Blue funding to the Alaska Delegation.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
7. **Motion:** [Dave Hull/Danita Koehler] To write a letter thanking the USDA for its support for the

Code Blue Program.

Action: Motion passed unanimously.

8. **Motion:** [Ron Bowers/Soren Threadgill] To write a letter to the Training Committee that ACEMS strongly recommends that EMTs receive pediatric related training and that the Training Committee recommend the number of hours.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
9. **Motion:** [Dave Hull/ Ron Bowers] To write a letter to the supervisor of Paul Perry that ACEMS is pleased with their commitment to EMS in conducting the EMT-III online class and the distance learning concept and encourage them to continue this development.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
10. **Motion:** [John Dickens/Don Hudson] To write a letter of support for the web-based electronic certification application software (\$ 200.000) for the EMS unit.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
11. **Motion:** [Dave Hull/Soren Threadgill] To write a memo recommending that the EMS regulations be updated.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.
12. **Motion:** [Danita Koehler/Dave Hull] To send a letter of support for the YK Region's grant. Brian Lefferts will prepare the draft.
Action: Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at **5:00** pm.